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ABSTRACT

This report examines the current state of citizenship instruction in U.S. schools, how we teach American citizenship, and what citizenship education looks like in California. The National Assessment of Educational Progress civics assessment determined that one-third of test-takers were below proficient and only one-fifth were at proficient level. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement used the Civic Education study to measure understanding of principles common to all democracies. The average score for 27 countries was 100, and American 9th- graders scored an average of 102. Research shows that students' experiences and education affect their civic understanding. Many experts say that students are detached from civic life. Adults in a Harvard/Gallup survey showed considerable consensus about the teaching of citizenship and patriotism. They want democracy and traditions of loyalty and patriotism to be taught, but also the tradition of dissent, individual worth, and human dignity. California has published a guide to the teaching of moral, civic and ethical principles. California's curriculum guidelines emphasize knowledge and cultural understanding; skills attainment and social preparation; and democratic understanding and civic knowledge. The guidelines for each grade level are comprehensively detailed. (RKJ)

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REPORT

April 2002

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Clarifying Complex Education Issues

The Civic Purposes of Public Schools

In the wake of the events of September 11, America has experienced a patriotic revival. Schoolchildren are again reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, flags are flying from front porches, and Americans are making record charitable donations to relief funds.

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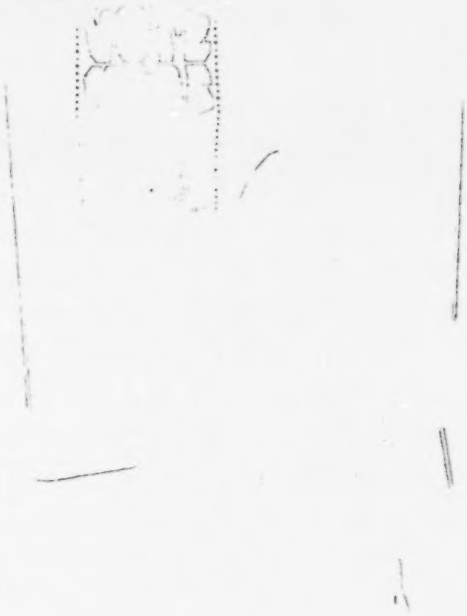

With this renewed and deepened sense of patriotism—demonstrated by Americans of all colors and countries of origin—many are calling for public schools to make sure they capture this moment of opportunity to educate their diverse student body for American citizenship.

What roles can and should schools play in educating students to sustain and strengthen American democracy for upcoming generations? What messages and lessons do we expect schools to deliver to our young people? Do schools and communities need to reassess this component of their standards and curricula to place greater emphasis on citizenship education, or are they already doing what they can? Does the California curriculum strike a balance between promoting tolerance and appreciation for diversity in cultures and views while at the same time developing in students a superordinate loyalty to the United States?

This report will describe what we know about the state of citizenship instruction in U.S. schools today, the major issues upon which the American public must gain consensus regarding what and how we teach American citizenship to our children, and specifically what citizenship education looks like in California. This report will also suggest some policy implications for state and local leaders and communities, as well as provide resources for how to learn more.

Do today's students understand what it means to be an American citizen?

For several decades, researchers and the public generally have been concerned that young people are increasingly losing the interest and willingness to get involved in civic life. While many find the patriotic fervor awakened by September 11 a heartening rebuttal to this point of view, it may be short-lived. Further, it may be built on a shallow foundation in terms of young people's understanding and commitment to civic responsibility and democratic ideals.

Assessments provide a perspective for evaluating students' civic understanding

A sampling of American students recently participated in two assessments of their civics knowledge that provide a baseline for evaluating their civic understanding and measuring how that changes over time. These assessments also give a valuable framework for defining the various characteristics one might expect in a person who is well prepared to take up his or her civic responsibilities. And they point to the important role schools play in developing a civic understanding among their students.

NAEP civics assessment is based on a national framework

In 1998 the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics assessment was administered to a representative sample of 22,000 American public and nonpublic school students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. The NAEP assessment is based on the *Civics*

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Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress, a document developed by a panel of educators, testing experts, researchers, policymakers, students, and members of the business community. The framework identifies three critical components of citizenship education over which students should demonstrate mastery:

- ✔ **Content knowledge,** which includes knowledge of civic life, politics, government, and the roles of citizens; the principles of American democracy and foundations of the American political system; and the relationship of the United States to the world.
- ✔ **Intellectual and participatory skills,** identified as those that enable citizens to use their content knowledge to describe, evaluate, and take and defend positions on public issues.
- ✔ **Civic dispositions** or the qualities necessary for upholding the principles of a democratic society and government, including the assumption of certain personal, political, civic, and economic responsibilities as well as respect for individual worth and human dignity.

Student performance was rated as "below basic," "basic," "proficient," or "advanced." In 1998 approximately one-third of students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades performed below the basic level of achievement on the NAEP civics assessment. Of the remaining students, most scored at the "basic" level, with roughly one-fifth of test-takers scoring at the "proficient" level and 2% (4% of 12th graders) at the advanced level.

American students fare better on an international assessment

In 1999 the United States, along with 27 other countries, participated in the Interna-

U.S. students score well compared to their counterparts in 27 countries

Civic Content

Nation	Average
Poland	112
Greece	109
Finland	108
Cyprus	108
Hong Kong (SAR)	108
Slovak Republic	107
Italy	105
Norway	103
Czech Republic	103
United States	**102**
Hungary	102
Slovenia	102
Russian Federation	102
Denmark	100
International Average	**100**
Australia	99
Germany	99
Bulgaria	99
Sweden	97
Portugal	97
England	96
Switzerland	96
Belgium (French)	94
Estonia	94
Lithuania	94
Romania	93
Latvia	92
Chile	89
Colombia	89

Civic Skills

Nation	Average
United States	**114**
Finland	110
Cyprus	108
Australia	107
Poland	106
Greece	105
Italy	105
England	105
Hong Kong (SAR)	104
Slovak Republic	103
Norway	103
Czech Republic	102
Sweden	102
Switzerland	102
Hungary	101
Germany	101
Denmark	100
International Average	**100**
Slovenia	99
Russian Federation	96
Belgium (French)	96
Bulgaria	95
Portugal	95
Estonia	95
Lithuania	93
Latvia	92
Romania	90
Chile	88
Colombia	84

Data: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study, 1999.

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tional Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study (CivEd). This assessment measured the civics knowledge of a representative sample of 2,811 ninth-graders in the nation's public and nonpublic schools. The CivEd study included an assessment of students' content knowledge and civic skills, as well as surveys of students, teachers, and schools. This assessment was not designed to measure students' knowledge of their own country's government, but rather to measure knowledge and understanding of civic principles that are common among all democracies.

The average international score was 100. American ninth-graders scored 102 in civic content knowledge (e.g., key features of democracies). In civic skills (e.g., understanding a brief political article or a political cartoon), U.S. students outperformed students in all other countries with a score of 114. (See the table on page 2 for more detailed results and a list of the countries that participated.)

Students' experiences and education affect their civic understanding

As part of its assessment, NAEP collected information from students, teachers, and their schools in order to help put the student results in context. The NAEP civics assessment also asked students about home, school, and community factors that could influence their development as citizens. For example, it looked at student employment and student volunteerism. The results showed that 12th-graders employed one to 15 hours per week were more likely to score at or above the "proficient" level than peers who either worked more hours or not at all. Twelfth-grade test-takers who did volunteer work, either through school or on their own, had a considerably higher tendency to score at or above "proficient" than did peers who did no volunteer work.

An analysis of the same data by researchers Richard Niemi and Jane Junn indicates that "school and curriculum have an enduring impact on the development of civic knowledge." Their analysis, which looked at high school students, showed that those who had taken civics or government courses demonstrated significantly more political knowledge than those who had not completed this type of coursework. The authors also found that more knowledgeable students have more confidence in the American political system.

To some degree, the results on both assessments mirrored differences in achievement among student groups on other standardized tests. For example, on the NAEP test considerably higher percentages of white and Asian-American students scored at or above the "proficient" level than did their peers in other ethnic groups. Nonpublic school students also outperformed their public school counterparts. On the international CivEd assessment, white, Asian-American, and multiracial students scored higher than their American peers from other ethnic groups. Additionally, among American test-takers, the number of books in the home, parental educational attainment, and receiving the daily newspaper at home were all positively related to higher student test scores on the CivEd assessment.

Experts say American youth are detached from civic life

In looking at this multifaceted issue, many researchers find that today's young people lack civic interest as compared to youth three or four decades ago. But, those researchers say, the attitudes of today's youth largely mirror the example set for them by the adults in their lives. Implicit in these concerns is a question about the part public education has played in this dynamic. To what extent have teachers, and the educational community more generally, changed in terms of their perspective on teaching citizenship and patriotism, particularly in some ethical framework?

William Damon, professor of education and director of the Center on Adolescence at Stanford University, has been studying moral development for the past 20 years. According to his 1999 research, today's youth show little interest in people outside their immediate circles of friends and family. Damon's research consisted of a few in-depth interviews with 14- to 18-year-olds living in heartland American communities and the examination of essays that these and hundreds of other students had written about the laws and purpose of life in today's world. This finding is not surprising, Damon says, given the increasing isolation from community that youths' adult role models experience. In addition, he says that the essays and interviews showed that youth have minimal awareness of domestic and world current events, hold few opinions on politics or current social problems, and do not have a

"School and curriculum have an enduring impact on the development of civic knowledge."

—Researchers Richard Niemi and Jane Junn

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"Dissent is one of democracy's proudest traditions—and it can be taught that way, enhancing rather than decreasing respect for the nation's heritage."

—William Damon, Director of the Center on Adolescence at Stanford University

strong sense of what their American citizenship truly means. Few expressed any interest in becoming a civic leader.

Cultural trends also contribute to this apathy, Damon says. He believes that "patriotism" has not been in vogue for the past three decades. (Damon was writing in 2001, prior to the September 11 attack.) Traditionally, schools have been the places where students learn about American democracy, citizenship, and one's patriotic duties. Most educators today, while feeling a personal sense of patriotism, do not consider instilling patriotism to be an objective of education, Damon says.

Even the definition of patriotism is up for grabs. Some educators may see patriotism as a strong sense of loyalty to one's country and its leaders, while others may emphasize the democratic principles of questioning and criticizing authority, including the role of civil disobedience in shaping U.S. society. Others may have a negative view of nationalism and encourage the role of individuals as world citizens. "Influential educators have urged schools to teach children to become 'cosmopolitan' or 'citizens of the world' rather than to identify themselves with any particular nation-state," Damon says.

David Gordon of the *Harvard Education Letter* says a lack of patriotism can have far-reaching results. "Students do not learn to positively identify with democratic society and consequently are unwilling—unable, really—to commit to it."

Damon agrees that positive lessons about American politics, tradition, and patriotism are important to students in their development of civil identities. But, he adds, teachers should not present a "whitewashed p.cture of America."

"It is a necessary part of character education," Damon argues, "to teach about the mistakes that have been made and the problems that persist." Rather than presenting society as perfect, it is far more useful to a child's character formation to emphasize that no one is perfect but one can always try to do better. "Dissent," he points out, "is one of democracy's proudest traditions—and it can be taught that way, enhancing rather than decreasing respect for the nation's heritage."

Although educators need to be "perfectly honest with kids about our failures," Damon says in an interview with the *Harvard Education Letter*, "that doesn't mean they should come away from social studies class with a sense that America is something to be ashamed of and that citizenship is something to disaffiliate with. That's very dangerous for society and for democracy. And it's dangerous for kids' individual development. It robs them of something positive they can identify with, a positive sense of purpose."

The public voices similar concerns and attitudes

In two recent polls, Americans express similar concerns about citizenship education and what it means to be patriotic.

A Harwood Institute/Gallup Survey in January 2002 found that 76% of the 1,000 U.S. adults polled agreed that civics education is not given the attention it deserves. Although 59% said that personal involvement was not necessary for one to be truly patriotic, a much larger majority agreed that patriotism is more than flying flags. When given a list of activities, the vast majority of those polled agreed the following activities were an important part of patriotism:

- ✔ Voting (97%);
- ✔ Displaying the flag (86%);
- ✔ Working for the common good, even when it runs counter to one's immediate self-interests (85%);
- ✔ Engaging in conversations with other people about important political issues our nation faces (84%);
- ✔ Publicly challenging prevailing public opinion in times of national crisis if they believe core democratic values are at stake (83%);
- ✔ Questioning the decisions of our nation's leaders, even when they are trying to rally the country (77%);
- ✔ Demonstrating on behalf of a cause one believes in strongly even when the cause is unpopular (75%); and
- ✔ Attending a parade celebrating America (74%).

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In a 1998 Public Agenda poll of 800 parents, *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, most of the respondents agreed that the United States is a special country and a place they are grateful to call home. At the same time, a majority—61%— said that American values, national identity, work ethic, and sense of community were being lost. Of those polled, 90% agreed that most Americans take their freedoms for granted. And there was a strong sense that most people are too wrapped up in their own lives to go out of their way to help others anymore.

Parents in the survey also noted that "the '*pluribus*' is getting more emphasis these days than the '*unum*,'" with 89% agreeing that there is "too much attention paid to what separates us and not enough to what we have in common."

Strengthening young people's civic identity: The school's role

The September 11, 2001, attacks occurred within this context of a relatively disaffected and uninformed group of young people. The resulting emotional, pro-America climate that has reverberated in the United States since has certainly surprised many, particularly in regard to the fervor of young people. Students are suddenly paying attention, and today educators have what they would call "a teachable moment." The challenge is coming to quick, general agreement about what the schools should do with this opportunity while respecting differing opinions about what is appropriate or most important.

Education and democracy go hand in hand

Since our country's inception, democracy and education have been inextricably linked. Over time that linkage has been re-examined and redefined many times. Early thinkers like Noah Webster believed that education could shape society and help develop a common national identity among all Americans. Horace Mann, architect of the common school movement in the 1800s, believed that education was instrumental for advancing society and eliminating poverty. And 20th-century philosopher John Dewey envisioned education as a vehicle for breaking down barriers between groups of people and instilling in them common values and a shared sense of purpose, which would ultimately lead to a more democratic society.

Today's educational theorists, educators, parents, policymakers, and communities are weighing in on what schools can and should do to teach democratic ideals and principles to American youth.

Walter Parker, professor of education at the University of Washington, is concerned that in most school curricula, the treatment of citizenship focuses on "assimilation, accomplishment, and spectatorship," and excludes discussion of the deeper issues in democracy. These issues, he says, should include its history, central principles, the problems democracy was meant to solve, the conditions necessary for upholding or undermining it, the process of creating law, and the tensions inherent in balancing diversity with unity. Parker urges that the citizenship curriculum should include a full treatment of political, social, and cultural diversity, alongside the study of important documents and democratic processes.

Diane Ravitch, professor of education at New York University and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, believes that it is up to schools to equip students with the knowledge and intellectual tools necessary for active and engaged citizenship. She fears that without this understanding, young people will take for granted their rights and responsibilities, will fail to exercise them, and will lose their ability to defend what Americans most value about their society—democracy, freedom, human rights, and equality before the law.

Three researchers from the Character Education Partnership in Washington, D.C., argue that knowledge and intellectual tools are not enough. Schools need to practice what they preach if they want to reach students. "The best forms of character education are those that enlist students as active, influential participants in creating a caring and just environment in the classroom and in the school at large," say Eric Schaps, Esther F. Schaeffer, and Sanford N. McDonnell in the Sept. 12, 2001, issue of *Education Week*. "The challenge is for the school to become a microcosm in which students practice age-appropriate versions of the roles they must face in later life—and deal with the related problems and complications." The best way for schools to engage and inspire

"The best forms of character education are those that enlist students as active, influential participants in creating a caring and just environment in the classroom and in the school at large."

—Eric Schaps, Esther F. Schaeffer, and Sanford N. McDonnell, Character Education Partnership researchers in the Sept. 12, 2001, issue of *Education Week*

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Much like this country's current struggle to define the workable balance between shoring up homeland security and preserving personal liberties, educators, parents, policymakers, and communities must agree on how, in the classroom, to effectively promote appreciation of both the nation and the individual.

students is to meet their legitimate needs for safety, belonging, competence, and autonomy, the researchers say. If schools are successful in providing those needs, students will identify with their schools in much the same way they identify with their families.

What parents want: Teach young people about American democracy and traditions

According to findings in the Public Agenda study, parents strongly believe that young people must learn about the principles upon which this country was founded. Ninety-one percent said that all students should study American history so they can understand what their country represents, and 83% of parents said they want schools to teach kids to appreciate the liberties guaranteed under the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

In this same study, parents resoundingly called for schools to teach students traditional ideals of what it means to be an American. At the same time, parents believe that teaching young people what America stands for is a shared responsibility between families and the public schools.

While parents did express concern that society may focus too much on what makes us different from one another rather than on the common ground Americans share, they did not blame schools for this. Of those polled, 55% believe that the public schools are paying the right amount of attention to diversity and the traditions of other societies. The balance of parents were almost evenly split on the question, with 21% saying schools paid too much attention to diversity and 19% saying not enough. Said one father: "People themselves are paying too much attention to the things that divide them, not the schools. The schools aren't making it an issue."

In general, the Public Agenda study found that most parents believe that public schools play a critical role in unifying an increasingly diverse society. They also have commonly-held expectations for an approach schools should use to teach American citizenship: instruction that balances learning about and respecting other cultures with acquiring a shared understanding and appreciation for what it means to be an American.

Balancing "*e pluribus*" and "*unum*" presents challenges

It is one thing to want to expose students to balanced perspectives of what unites us and what makes us individuals, but it is quite another to put those desires to work in instructional practice. Much like this country's current struggle to define the workable balance between shoring up homeland security and preserving personal liberties, educators, parents, policymakers, and communities must agree on how, in the classroom, to effectively promote appreciation of both the nation and the individual. It can be argued that the history of public education up to this point has been marked by its lack of balance in this regard.

The concept of the common school, developed about 150 years ago, formed the basis for this country's public education system. The common school was conceived as a place where students, including an enormous and ever-growing immigrant community, could learn about the roots of American democratic and republican ideals. Its basic goals included assimilating these new arrivals into American culture, preparing workers for industry, and developing in young people the qualities necessary for them to become informed citizens and share in a public discourse.

"Government-operated schools would develop civic virtue and national identity through a shared set of values reflected in the curriculum," says Rosemary C. Salomone, director of the Center for Law and Policy at St. John's University School of Law, in *Making Good Citizens*. "This ambitious project assumed that Americans, old and new, could unite around a common set of public and private values, and a vision of educational purpose and process. Both would serve as the groundwork for indoctrination and socialization."

Since the time when the common school was thus first envisioned and created, American society has changed a great deal. Increasingly, the ideal of the common school has been put to the test. Particularly since World War II, a variety of societal forces have underscored the values of diversity and challenged the principles of the common school, which tended to ignore the benefits of preserving cultural identity and to downplay the impact of racism and intolerance in American life.

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These long-term changes in society generally have combined with dynamics within education. For example, researchers have made many advances in their understanding of child development and of how people learn. These call for an approach that seeks to better understand and adapt the system to the individual child. This can include cultural differences that are part of students' individualism. Concurrently, schools are confronting new theories and literature on citizenship, especially since the collapse of communism and the Eastern bloc. As a result, the sources teachers used to draw on to illustrate democratic principles and ideas, or to compare them with other systems (like communism), may not be as valid or useful. New academic fields, such as women's studies and ethnic studies, present a wealth of new theories and literature that K–12 educators need to consider as they develop the curriculum.

Some raise the concern that educators—and the education community more generally—have gone too far in adapting to these changes. In an interview with *Education Week* after September 11, Ravitch said: "No one addressed this issue more forcefully than the late Albert Shanker, the president of the American Federation of Teachers. … Shanker warned that multiculturalism, as it is taught in the United States, is dangerous for a democratic, multiethnic society because it encourages people 'to think of themselves not as individuals, but primarily in terms of their membership in groups.'" By focusing on differences instead of commonalities, Shanker said, "this kind of education does not increase tolerance; on the contrary, it feeds racial and ethnic tensions and erodes civil society, which requires a sense of the common good, a recognition that we are all members of the human race."

Salomone captures the dilemma educators face when they try to balance these opposing forces. "The notion of tolerance as 'mutual forbearance despite our differences' … sets the stage for more peaceful coexistence in the realm of education. But it also collides head-on with the homogenizing political purposes of the common school as it was originally envisioned and as it continues to function in contemporary society. So how do we resolve this dilemma?"

Her recommendation is a shift from the idea of a common school to that of a common education. The objective of the common school is to homogenize students by imparting a fixed set of values that shows little regard for the differences in family values. The objective of a common education, on the other hand, is to impart a common core of political principles, virtues, and understandings while recognizing differences at the broad margins.

"In the name of commonality," Salomone says, "education must develop shared values, principles, and political commitments to promote stability, coherence, and justice for free and equal citizenship. In the name of diversity, it must recognize legitimate demands of pluralism and encourage understanding and tolerance."

In a 1996 paper, researcher Parker comes to a similar conclusion. He points out that this country's founding fathers were American men with property. Their concept of difference referred almost exclusively to "differences of opinion among insiders on matters of mutual concern." That narrow conception, Parker argues, pervades citizenship education and explains to some extent why it is not taken seriously in some schools.

If the conception had a motto, he says, it might read: "Contain political diversity; constrain social and cultural diversity." That, Parker says, was the original conception of *e pluribus unum*, or "from manyness, oneness." Parker suggests another interpretation of the Latin phrase: "alongside manyness, oneness," the political one alongside the cultural many. Like Salomone's common education approach, Parker's interpretation reduces the tension between the two and opens up a way to reconcile them.

Is California educating for citizenship?

Researchers and parents agree that it is important for students to obtain civic knowledge and skills for the continued well-being of American democracy. Further, they see schools as playing a critical role in developing these capacities in youth. And while the balancing act between unity and diversity will continue—and at times create serious conflicts—the basic commitment to educating students for citizenship will doubtless remain.

For California, the question is what the state currently requires in terms of civics educa-

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To what extent does the state have to put civics education on the test in order to get schools and teachers to put it into their lesson plans?

tion, whether that measures up to some objective standards for quality, and how that gets translated into classroom instruction. A pressing concern among some observers is whether educators can and will place the necessary emphasis on civics education in light of the state's standards-based and accountability reforms, with their focus on high-stakes assessments. Put another way, to what extent does the state have to put civics education on the test in order to get schools and teachers to put it into their lesson plans?

Researchers describe good citizenship education

Researcher Damon believes that students must be exposed to civic knowledge and to positive messages about American democracy. But in order for this exposure to be meaningful and effective, he says, it must occur in multiple settings. When students see democracy in action in a variety of ways, Damon says, they will come away with a sense that American ideals are authentic and feasible, and that they are practiced today in our society.

Drawing on his knowledge of effective character education programs, Damon suggests that schools and communities work together to create opportunities for students to participate in local (and broader) civic and political activities. He also recommends that teachers help students tie their personal experiences to what they learn about both historical figures and current civic leaders. He emphasizes the importance of instilling in students a sense of faith in the value of democratic governance and high expectations for their own involvement in it.

Looking at the results of the 1998 NAEP civics assessment, Niemi and Junn used student test results to identify some instructional practices they believe were particularly effective. For example, students scored higher on the test when they had studied a variety of civics-related topics (e.g., criminal justice, state and local government structures, the role of lobbyists), or had been in classes with frequent discussions of current events. Those who took dedicated civics classes that covered a range of topics and included frequent discussions of current events scored 11% higher than students who did not. Niemi and Junn also found that students who have instruction in politics and government at age 17—when they are about to assume the rights and responsibilities of adulthood—are more likely to vote and participate in other political activities.

As with many areas of academic content, various organizations have also compiled standards for teaching about civic responsibility generally and civics/government specifically. The U.S. Department of Education, for example, commissioned the Center for Civics Education to develop *National Standards for Civics and Government*. A strand covering the topic is also part of the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* approved by the National Council on Social Studies (NCSS).

Based on the research and these national recommendations, the earmarks of good citizenship education include two different kinds of experiences for students. The first involves the formal curriculum and instructional strategies. In the classroom, students should learn:

- ✔ Civics knowledge and skills at every grade level, with special emphasis during the senior year.
- ✔ About the founding documents, civic institutions, and political processes in the United States, laying the groundwork for further understanding of our government and providing reference points for comparison with how other world governments are structured and work.
- ✔ To connect principles with current events by discussing controversial issues, giving students the opportunity to understand how issues are being debated and decided.

The second kind of experience needed to effectively educate students for civic responsibility goes beyond the classroom. It provides opportunities for them to apply what they learn and encourages them to participate in their community. This means giving students the opportunity to:

- ✔ Put the principles of democratic citizenship into practice by participating in activities such as mock trials, school government, and conflict resolution programs.
- ✔ Participate in service-learning projects; many studies indicate that these experiences increase students' civic-mindedness.

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- ✔ Learn about local issues from their local leaders. They need to see and have the chance to interact with people who are actively taking part in civic leadership and responsibility.

How California's standards line up against the national recommendations

In California, the State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted standards for history/social science that address civics education in various ways. As noted in the box on page 10, these official expectations cover the curriculum-specific portion of the national guidelines at most grade levels. Of note, however, is the lack of any state-level expectations regarding history/social science instruction in the 9th grade. This reflects the state's minimum graduation requirements, which call for three years of study in this subject during high school. The state instead encourages districts to offer social studies electives, which could include civics-oriented classes, in 9th grade.

Helping students learn to connect principles with current events depends less on state content standards and more on teachers' instructional techniques. The state provides some explicit guidelines beginning in 8th grade and continuing through the high school curriculum. However, the fulfillment of this ideal rests on the skills and inclination of individual teachers rather than on covering a particular content area.

In addition, the state has published a guide with the cumbersome but descriptive title, *Handbook on the Rights and Responsibilities of School Personnel and Students in the Areas of Providing Moral, Civic, and Ethical Education, Teaching About Religion, Promoting Responsible Attitudes and Behaviors, and Preventing and Responding to Hate Violence*. This document provides guidance for educators as they traverse the sometimes controversial path of incorporating discussions of "principles" into their instruction.

California's curriculum adoption system leaves to local school districts the final selection of their textbooks and other instructional materials. However, districts are expected to select materials consistent with the state standards, and to that end the SBE officially adopts a Curriculum Framework to guide the development and selection of textbooks. For history/social sciences, the framework puts forward three major goals:

- ✔ Knowledge and cultural understanding;
- ✔ Skills attainment and social participation;
- ✔ Democratic understanding and civic knowledge.

As the box on the Curriculum Framework describes, these goals include specific expectations regarding the knowledge and understanding students should attain during their years in California public schools.

An axiom in education is that what gets measured gets taught. On a statewide level, civics has been included in California's high-stakes assessment system only insofar as it is part of history/social studies, and then only in grades 9 to 11. The state is currently in the process of developing a standards-based assessment for history/social studies in 8th grade. Plans are for this assessment to be given for the first time in the spring of 2003. And some of the content on the 11th grade assessment of U.S. history covers civics education. In addition, seniors can voluntarily take the Golden State Exam and the Advanced Placement test on U.S. government.

Educating for civic responsibility depends on local initiative

The experiences that experts recommend take place outside the classroom are even more dependent on the commitment of teachers, school principals, and district-level personnel. Educators vary in their willingness to invite local political leaders such as school board members, city council members, and legislators into the schools. Schools also need interested staff willing and able to coordinate and oversee student participation in order to give them experiences such as mock trial, student government, and conflict resolution. Budget constraints and priorities can limit the options as well.

Many initiatives that involve civic activities have sponsoring organizations that can help with planning and program development. For example, the Mock Trial Program is a national program organized by the Constitutional

Helping students learn to connect principles with current events depends less on state content standards and more on teachers' instructional techniques.

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State expectations for history/social science guide civics education

The Curriculum Framework addresses over-arching goals

The framework adopted in 2001 states three major goals, each of which has some relationship to the teaching of civic responsibility:

Goal #1 — Knowledge and Cultural Understanding includes six strands of knowledge: historical, ethical, cultural, geographic, economic, and sociopolitical literacy.

Goal #2 — Skills Attainment and Social Participation includes participation skills (being able to work with others as a requirement for citizenship in a democracy) and critical thinking skills (the ability to critically evaluate public issues, candidates for office, and decisions government officials make).

Goal #3 — Democratic Understanding and Civic Knowledge includes three strands, all of which include expectations for students that relate to their civic understanding and preparation for active democratic participation.

Strand #1: To understand our ***national identity,*** the framework expects students to:

- Recognize that American society is a single nation composed of many individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Understand the American creed "as an ideology extolling equality and freedom."
- Recognize the status of minorities and women during different eras in American history.
- Examine contemporary immigration from Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Latin America and how California and the U.S. demography changes as a result.
- Understand the U.S. role in world history, in light of its own diverse makeup of immigrants.
- Realize that true patriotism celebrates America as a nation that unites many people from all cultures and backgrounds.

Strand #2: To understand our ***constitutional heritage,*** the framework expects students to:

- Know and understand the basic principles of democracy.
- Know and understand the origins of the concepts and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution.

Strand #3: To understand ***civic values, rights, and responsibilities,*** the framework expects students to:

- Understand what is required of citizens in a democracy, such as voting, behaving ethically, valuing give-and-take.
- Understand an individual's responsibility for upholding the democratic system, including thinking critically and independently, participating regularly in the democracy, and working through the democratic process to realize the full potential of the highest ideals of democracy.

Course recommendations and content standards are spelled out by grade level

In 1998 the State Board of Education adopted academic content standards for history/social science that included the areas of civics education and government at selected grade levels.

- **K–5:** The focus is on individual responsibilities and values to uphold and on how these values play out in everyday life. As appropriate at each grade level (through Grade 5), students study symbols, history, famous figures, important events, economic concepts, and the basic structure of government. In Grade 4 students study California history. In Grade 5 they learn about the beginnings of the United States, including the American Revolution and the Constitution.
- **Grade 6:** World history and geography (ancient civilizations, their governments, and their social, religious, and political structures). Students learn about Ancient Greece, including origins of direct and representative democracy.
- **Grade 7:** World history and geography (medieval to early modern times, their structures, etc.). Students learn about how democratic thought and institutions were influenced by thinkers during the Enlightenment.
- **Grade 8:** U.S. history and geography. Students study "ideas, issues, and events from the framing of the Constitution up to World War I," including major events preceding the founding of the United States, political principles, the political system, and ways in which citizens participate in it.
- **Grade 9:** Elective year. Suitable courses suggested are law-related education, California studies, and ethnic studies.
- **Grade 10:** World history (modern). Students "extrapolate from the American experience that democratic ideals are often achieved at a high price, remain vulnerable, and are not practiced everywhere in the world."
- **Grade 11:** U.S. history and geography. Students study major turning points in American history; the federal government and courts; and the "continuing tension between the individual and the state." In addition, "they learn that the United States has served as a model for other nations and that the rights and freedoms we enjoy are not accidents, but the results of a defined set of political principles that are not always basic to citizens of other countries...."
- **Grade 12:** Principles of American Democracy (one semester) and Economics (one semester). Students "pursue deeper understanding of the institutions of American government," comparing systems of government around the world, and looking at changing interpretations of the founding documents, with an emphasis on analyzing relationships among federal, state, and local governments.

The 12th grade curriculum includes graduation requirements

To qualify for high school graduation, students must read and be taught about the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, sections of the Federalist Papers, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address, and George Washington's Farewell Address.

Copies of the framework and the standards are available online at: www.cde.ca.gov/cfir

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Rights Foundation. About 8,000 middle and high school students participate statewide. Kids Voting USA is a nonprofit organization that enables students to visit official polling sites on election day to cast a ballot similar in content to the official ballot. According to Kids Voting USA, its network reaches 5 million students.

At the state policy level, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has pinpointed service learning as a potential area of focus. They define service learning as "a teaching method that combines service to the community with classroom curriculum. It is a hands-on approach to mastering subject material while fostering civic responsibility." In March 2001, ECS reported that, although some states are looking more seriously at ways to incorporate service learning into school instruction, only Maryland requires it for high school graduation. In California, the CDE supports local efforts through the CalServe K–12 Service-Learning Initiative, which is part of a federally-funded program.

Capturing the moment: Implications for California

Public education plays an important and central role in the strength of American democracy. In the aftermath of September 11, schools may have the opportunity to reverse or at least slow American youths' disaffection with civic life and democratic responsibilities. What can California policymakers and educators do to capture this moment in time and reinvigorate civic engagement and the appreciation of democratic ideals among the state's young people?

Local districts build curriculum based on state guidelines

At the state level, policymakers control the guidelines and expectations around civics education, from which local educators build their curriculum. Democratic understanding and civics knowledge, already central goals of the state's framework, are built into the academic content standards in various places. Although they could be strengthened, the state's guidelines provide a strong starting point and much guidance.

But, unlike many other standards, U.S. government is currently not explicitly included in statewide assessments. In an era of increased emphasis on accountability, will educators be able to justify putting more time and energy into civics lessons at the expense of other learning goals, many of which end up on state tests? The move to establish an 8th grade assessment may help encourage more commitment to this curriculum, at least at the middle school level.

However, as researcher Walter Parker points out, the school's mission is much broader than its civic learning goals, including preparing students for the workforce. Rather than stealing time from the current already-cramped curriculum, perhaps educators can re-evaluate how they teach civic principles and re-energize their teaching with a more hands-on approach. Many resources are available for helping link current events to academic subjects. (See the To Learn More box on page 12.) Service learning that connects out-of-classroom community service with in-class studies is one approach. Kids Voting USA, Mock Elections (sponsored by the League of Women Voters), visits to City Council meetings, or classroom visits by local officials are other ways to make democratic processes and principles more tangible.

Schools can also focus on reflecting the goals and values they want their students to embrace. Schaps and his colleagues suggest that schools need to create fair and humane discipline policies, provide equitable distribution of resources, and honor many kinds of accomplishments, not just academic and athletic abilities. Principals and teachers need to build community by encouraging class meetings, cooperative learning groups, "buddies" programs, whole-school events, and service-learning opportunities outside the classroom.

California could also encourage new approaches and community building through its professional training. Is the state training teachers on how to help students identify with the principles of democracy and establish personal commitments to their society? Are teacher training programs emphasizing the importance of citizenship standards and how to teach them? Are school leaders reviewing their internal policies to see if they are providing

In the aftermath of September 11, schools may have the opportunity to reverse or at least slow American youths' disaffection with civic life and democratic responsibilities.

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good role models for their students and building community? Are districts and schools devoting professional development time to these issues, which both researchers and the public see as important?

Schools appear to have the support they need to teach civic engagement

Based on opinion polls and research studies, California educators appear to have the mandate they need to put more energy into this goal. And although NAEP test results are worrisome, there are signs that today's students do understand basic principles of democracy. Compared to 27 other countries that agreed to participate in the study, U.S. students scored above average in their knowledge of democracy and were first at being able to apply civic principles.

Researchers in this area say the rewards of a challenging and interactive curriculum can be huge in terms of building both student character and a well-functioning civic society. As Stanford University's William Damon says: "Educational guidance that helps students find enduring reasons to devote themselves to their vital communities—national as well as local—will promote affiliation, civic engagement, and participatory citizenship." EdSource

To Learn More

Research and publications

Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society. Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti, editors. Yale University Press, 2001. This collection of 14 essays by leading thinkers from a variety of disciplines analyzes the impact of education on building a democratic society.

"Teaching Civics After September 11." David Gordon, *Harvard Education Letter*, November/December 2001. This bimonthly publication features in-depth analyses of current education issues. Phone: 800/513-0763; website: http://edletter.org/

"A Lot to Be Thankful For: What Parents Want Children To Learn About America" (1998) by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public opinion research organization based in New York City. Phone: 212/686-6610; website: www.publicagenda.org/

NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card Highlights and The International IEA Civic Education Study (CivEd) can both be found on the website of the National Center for Education Statistics, the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education. Phone: 202/502-7300; website: http://nces.ed.gov/

The Harwood Institute/Gallup Poll is part of the New Patriotism Project, which wants to move Americans to a higher level of political engagement. Website: www.theharwoodinstitute.org/newpatriotism/prsurvey.html

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (1994). Task Force of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), which provides leadership, service, and support for all social studies educators. Phone: 800/683-0812; website: www.socialstudies.org/standards

Organizations working to enhance civic education

Constitutional Rights Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to educating young people about civic participation. Phone: 213/487-5590; website: www.crf-usa.org/

California Council for the Social Studies provides information and support to all social studies teachers. Phone: 661/533-2277; website: www.ccss.org/

Center for Civic Education is a nonprofit, nonpartisan corporation that specializes in civic/citizenship education. Website: www.civiced.org

Character Education Partnership is a nonpartisan coalition of organizations and individuals "dedicated to developing moral character and civic virtue in our nation's youth." Phone: 800/988-8081; website: www.character.org

Kids Voting USA educates and involves youth in the election process. Phone: 408/269-8683; website: www.kidsvotingusa.org/

What Kids Can Do combs the country for compelling examples of young people working on real-world issues. Phone: 401/247-7665; website: www.whatkidscando.org/home.html

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